

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5968

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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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DEFENSE FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, UK

SUBJ: ORAL ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS: MASON/  
BOURGES VISIT

1. MICHAEL BPOThERTON, MP (CONSERVATIVE, LOUTH) ASKED SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE ROY MASON ON 21 OCTOBER IN THE HOUSE WHETHER THE MOD WOULD MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE FRENCH "WHEREBY PILOTS OF THE FLEET AIR ARM CAN FLY FROM DECKS OF FRENCH AIRCRAFT CARRIERS AFTER HMS 'ARK ROYAL' HAS BEEN PHASED OUT?" MASON REPLIED "THAT THAT WAS BEING DONE". CYRIL TOWNSEND, MP (CONSERVATIVE, BEXLEY-HEATH) ASKED WHETHER "THE PROGRAMMING OF BRITISH AND FRENCH POLARIS SUBMARINES IS SUITABLY CO-ORDINATED?" MASON REPLIED "NO, SIR. NO NUCLEAR EXCHANGES WERE DISCUSSED WITH THE FRENCH". ROGER MOATE, MP (CONSERVATIVE, FAVERSHAM) ASKED MASON "IF HE IS SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF COORDINATION OF DEFENSE POLICY BETWEEN THE UK AND FRANCE?" MASON REPLIED, "YES, SIR." MOATE CONTINUED BY ASKING 'AT A TIME WHEN BRITAIN IS BEING CRITICISED FOR STANDING UP FOR ITS OWN INTERESTS BY ADOPTING A NON-COMMUNITY APPROACH ON ENERGY, IS IT NOT IRONIC THAT

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FRANCE SHOULD STILL REFUSE TO PLAY A FULL AND ACTIVE PART

IN NATO?...WE WERE TOLD THAT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMON MARKET WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEFENSE OF EUROPE? WILL HE SUGGEST TO THE FRENCH THAT, UNTIL THEY ADOPT SUCH A FULL AND ACTIVE ROLE THEY, UNLIKE US, ARE NOT BEING GOOD EUROPEANS? MASON REPLIED, "NO, I WOULD NOT BE AS BLUNT AS TO TELL THE FRENCH THAT. FRANCE HAPPENS TO BE A MEMBER OF NATO, BUT, WHEREAS WE ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE MILITARY STRUCTURE, FRANCE IS NOT. HOWEVER, FRANCE MAINTAINS A MILITARY MISSION TO THE MILITARY COMMITTEE OF NATO AND IS FULLY AWARE OF NATO DEVELOPMENTS". ALAN LEE WILLIAMS, MP (LABOUR, SUANSEA WEST) ASKED MASON IF HE AGREED "THAT THE FRENCH HAVE ALWAYS COMPLAINED ABOUT THE OVER-WEANING INFLUENCE OF THE US IN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE? DOES HE AGREE THAT IF HE WERE TO MAKE A SUCCESS -- AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROGROUP -- OF THE SO-CALLED TWO-WAY STREET IN THE PASSAGE OF ARMAMENTS, THIS WOULD BE A GREAT INCENTIVE FOR FRANCE TO REJOIN THE MILITARY SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE?" MASON REPLIED, "YES, AND I SHOULD APPLAUD THAT POSTURE WERE FRANCE TO ADOPT IT...THERE IS A VACANT CHAIR IN THE EUROGRMUP AND THE FRENCH CAN JOIN THE GROUP AT ANY TIME THEY WISH. I DREW THIS FACT TO THE ATTENTION OF MY FRENCH COLLEAGUE DURING THE COURSE OF DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM LAST WEEK. HE IS FULLY AWARE OF THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF DEFENCE EQUIPMENT MOVING FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA AND VICE VERSA IF THE TWO-WAY STREET CONCEPT GETS OFF THE GROUND". GEOFFREY PATTIE, MP (CONSERVATIVE, CHERTSEY AND WALTON) ASKED MASON, 'IN VIEW OF THE RECENT PURCHASE OF THE FRENCH MISSILE MILAN,...WHAT ARE THE FRENCH PURCHASING FROM US?" MASON REPLIED, "THE QUESTION CONCERNS DEFENSE POLICY AND NOT DEFENSE SALES. THERE WAS NOT A BRITISH EQUIVALENT OF MILAN AVAILABLE IN THE SAME TIME SCALE IN WHICH WE WANTED IT. WE ARE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE FRENCH TO PURCHASE MILAN HOPING TO GET PRODUCTION WORK IN BRITAIN AND THEN BE INVOLVED IN THE MID-TERM IMPROVEMENTS OF THE MISSILE".

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